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Notes of the Month.

To our regret we were responsible in this column last month for a note which seems to have mystified many of our readers. We called their attention to the first of a series of articles, and indicated that such would be found in that issue of the Magazine. Unfortunately the article, whose arrival we confidently expected, did not arrive until after the printing of the Magazine. Hence, the article to which reference was made was conspicuous by its absence. Made wiser by that experience, we have made sure this time of an article before alluding thereto. It is the one which deals with "The Present Situation," and is preliminary to other articles which we hope will follow monthly on "Religion and Modern Thought." Perhaps the interest taken by our readers therein will be none the less, even though realisation has lagged behind anticipation longer than we at first anticipated. At all events, we ask for it and its successors the favour of their most earnest thought.

* *

In calling attention to these articles, we are reminded of the death of a writer, who, in a religious contemporary, "The Christian World," undertook and successfully carried through for many years the kind of religious task our contributors are kindly undertaking in these columns. The Rev. Jonathan Brierley, B.A., known to many thousands of readers by the initials J.B. appended to his weekly articles, was not a member of our own religious community, yet found nowhere more interested and appreciative readers. In his dislike of dogma, in his heartfelt conviction that Christian doctrine should interpret the experience and be expressed in the language of to-day—in his readiness to receive suggestions and illustrations from every aspect of modern thought—he was akin to the most progressive members of our faith, and of every faith which values vital and progressive religion. Never strong, and often contending with great physical weakness, he demonstrated the ability of a brave and unselfish spirit to surmount obstacles and accomplish a great life task. Many perplexed and doubting minds sought counsel from him, and not a few gained therefrom a new outlook upon life and a new interest in religion. For these and for other reasons we readily join in the remarkable tribute of affection and re-

spect which his recent death called forth.

* *

Progress in religion implies not merely the acceptance of new truth, but the better understanding and the more fruitful application of the old. We can never over-estimate the debt we owe to a great movement like the Protestant Reformation, whose central principle is not even yet rightly appreciated or applied. It is consequently of concern to modern thinkers on religion to think back as well as forward, and find the beginning of their present privileges and liberties deeply rooted in the past. The fact that the son of one of our best-known English Unitarian ministers is responsible for a little book on "Luther and the Reformation" is not without interest, and was responsible for our reading of Mr. Leonard Agate's publication. We can commend it as a very careful and very readable piece of work, giving in a necessarily compressed but still quite clear form the story of a great personality and of a new epoch in the world's history. The only thing we missed was real enthusiasm for the singularly attractive and many-sided character of Luther. If it sometimes tends to disturb the careful balance of the would-be impartial historian, hero-worship is a good thing for the reader, as every student of Carlyle will admit. In this respect another recent work in the same cheap series of People's Books ("Bismarck and the German Empire," by Prof. F. M. Powicke, M.A., of Queen's University, Belfast), furnishes a contrast. The central personality of Bismarck succeeds in winning from its portrayor clearer recognition of its essential greatness than does the, to us, far more winning character of Luther. However, we are thankful for what we do find in Mr. Agate's book—a sound historical sense and a fitting sense of proportion.

* *

Many persons in the North of Ireland to whom a few weeks ago Kikuyu was geographically non-existent, and the Bishop of Uganda a person of no importance, have recently found both the objects of their strongest interest. Even the place seems less far away than it was, for the Bishop of Uganda has actually appeared amongst us. He addressed a large gathering in Belfast, at the end of last month, in advocacy of the claims of the Church Missionary Society. Although he made no allusion to the Kikuyu controversy, yet the large audience assembled, and the warmth of the welcome accorded him, clearly showed that his enlightened action in the direction of Christian unity was in the minds of his hearers. As confirmation of this was the explicit reference of the Bishop of Down and Connor and Dromore, and the applause it evoked, to "the gallant effort that he had made to grapple with the greatest problems that at the present time confronted missionary effort and Christian effort in all parts of the world." It is gratifying to find that amongst the foremost members of the Episcopal Church in the North of Ireland sympathy should go out to efforts on behalf of Christian unity. It promises well, not only for movements abroad, but gives us hope of continued and increasing co-operation amongst Christians at home.

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The giving of the Freedom of the City of Belfast to the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress was a fitting recognition of the splendid work done by both on behalf of the community. The occasion itself was one of the greatest interest, and called forth the utmost enthusiasm. It was a good thing to see members of all parties drawn together by a common aim and resolved upon a common purpose. No wonder that the recipients of the highest civic honours felt that such recognition of their labours was itself no slight reward, and gave an added incentive to a new period of service. We wish Mr. and Mrs. M'Mordie every success in their public-spirited undertaking, and have no fear of their falling short of their past achievements, excellent as these were.

"God's goodness hath been great to thee:
Let never day nor night unhallowed pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done."—*Shakespeare.*

RELIGION AND MODERN THOUGHT.

I.—The Present Situation.

We propose to publish in this magazine during the next few months a series of articles on the fundamentals of religious faith and their relation to the thought and tendencies of our time. The articles will be written by several contributors, and each writer will be responsible only for his own contribution. But, although responsibility is thus limited to each writer for the views expressed, they are all united in a common aim and by a common principle. Their aim is constructive, though they will not hesitate to criticise or repudiate what they believe to be erroneous, and they all firmly adhere to the principle of Non-Subscription, by which they mean the right and the duty to hold and to affirm whatsoever appears to them to be the truth. Truth, they believe, is best promoted by sincerity in belief and utterance, and this will explain why a number of writers holding, doubtless, different views on certain points of Christian doctrine, differences which will probably be apparent in the articles themselves, can yet unite in a common effort at theological re-construction. It is not, we believe, by ignoring differences, but rather by stating and working through them to the principle in which they are united, that truth is most effectively served.

It is necessary to add that what will be written is in the nature of an experiment only. All that the writers can hope to do is to offer suggestions and perhaps stimulate further thought. They would be the last to claim any kind of authority for their views other than that which is derived from such thought and study as they have been able to devote to the particular questions which will be discussed. But, although their statements will of necessity be in the nature of suggestions only, and, like all human effort and achievement, will bear the marks of imperfection, they cannot regard this as a reason for making no effort at all. Finality is God's prerogative, not man's. It is man's task to

> ". . . . pass from old to new,
> From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
> From what once seemed good to what now proves best."

But now someone may ask—Why is re-construction needed? Well, we believe a reference to the present religious situation is enough to show that the need is urgent. Re-constructive effort, indeed, is always needed, for life is always growing and developing, and always requiring, therefore, to be re-interpreted in fresh forms of thought. But the need to-day is particularly pressing, and for a variety of reasons. It cannot be denied, for instance, that there is a widespread feeling that the fundamentals of Christian faith are in danger of a complete collapse, and that the only tenable position any thoughtful person will be able to occupy in a very short time will be one of complete Agnosticism. Even within the Church, says a modern writer, who has had large opportunity of coming into contact with Church life in all its forms, "there is an uncertainty on the most vital questions of theology, a vague sense that foundations are tottering, and that old landmarks are sinking below the surface." We do not share this feeling of fear and uncertainty ourselves, but no observant person can doubt its widespread existence at the present time.

Nor is it difficult, we think, to see how this feeling arises. One of its primary causes is the rapid progress of modern knowledge. During the last twenty years or so knowledge has been pouring in upon the world from every side. Science has revealed to man's view a new universe and criticism has revealed a new Bible. The study of anthropology and archæology has thrown fresh light on man's early history and the growth of civilisation, and afforded additional proof, though none was needed, of the mythical character of the early narratives of Genesis.* The

* The term "mythical" is not used in any disparaging sense. Myth is a primitive form of philosophy. The early narratives of Genesis are of considerable *religious* value.

study of comparative religion again has considerably modified men's views of non-Christian religions and made the familiar distinction between the Christian religion as the "true" religion and all other religions as "false" quite impossible. In addition to this, the last generation has witnessed a remarkable development in the spirit of co-operation. In every direction men may be seen organising themselves for common ends. A new sense of solidarity has been awakened, and this, together with the new knowledge which with the aid of magazine articles and the like has filtered through in some measure to the popular mind, has helped to create a body of belief which is felt to be quite inconsistent with the traditional doctrines of the Church. This is the root cause of the religious unsettlement of our time. Old traditional positions have been outgrown, and, in the light of what they know and feel, men are now asking what they are to believe and where they can find a "foothold." The difficulty is accentuated by the widely prevalent idea that the traditional dogmas of the Church are the essence of Christianity. "If we abandon these," men ask, "have we not abandoned Christianity itself"? The Christian religion is identified with certain of its historical forms, and the belief prevails that we are obliged to choose between the acceptance of these forms and the abandonment of the Christian faith altogether.

That then in general terms is the present situation. How are we to deal with it? For our own part, we believe that our first duty is to emphasise the purely historical and temporary value of all the doctrinal forms of the Christian religion. They are all of them the outcome of certain historical conditions, and belong to a particular age. Illustrations of this view will, no doubt, appear in succeeding articles, but, as an illustration now, we may take the Westminster Confession of Faith. What is the real significance of this ancient Confession? For ourselves, we cannot regard it as the essence of the Christian faith, neither can we regard it as a "corruption" of its primitive simplicity and purity. We regard it rather as a fairly accurate expression of the Church's faith in Scotland in the 17th century. It is the form Christianity assumed in that country and at that time. "No other faith than that of Calvin could have secured the favour of Scotland at that period." It was born, therefore, of certain historical conditions, and it belongs to a particular age. It has an historical interest and value. Other illustrations could be given, but space forbids.

To emphasise, then, the historical and temporary value of the dogmas of the Church appears to us to be our first duty. And to do this is to show at the same time their unfitness to serve as an adequate expression of the religious faith of to-day. For the world moves on. The Church may attempt to stereotype the world's thought for all time, but it can never succeed in doing so. Church Councils and Assemblies notwithstanding, historical conditions change, knowledge grows from more to more, man's beliefs and hopes broaden and deepen, and sooner or later the need arises and the demand is made for new forms of thought for the living faith. As the experience, both of individuals and communities, abundantly testifies, life always tends to outgrow its religious interpretation. Who, for instance, lives to-day by the faith of the Athanasian Creed or the Westminster Confession? Experience has gone beyond them. Hence arises a second duty—the duty of re-construction, of finding, that is, suitable terms in which to convey the meaning of man's life to-day. We do not mean that in doing this we can ignore the dogmas of the past and start, as it were, *de novo* with our own generation. Without some knowledge of the past, we cannot hope to understand the meaning of the present. We cannot cut ourselves off from history. The greater part of what we are and have is our heritage from the past. Neither do we mean that the dogmas of the past are, as we have already said, "corruptions" of the primitive purity of the Christian faith. The work of the

Holy Spirit did not temporarily cease with the fixing of the New Testament Canon, and then begin again with the twentieth century. We believe that Holy Spirit has in some measure always been present and operative in the soul of man, and that all man's attempts to state Divine truth, therefore, will bear some marks of its presence. In other words, we believe that a measure of truth is to be found in all the dogmas of the Church, and that the task of re-construction consists in developing what truth they contain in accordance with the requirements of our own day. In this way something may be done, we believe, to serve the religious needs of our time. We need a living theology for the living faith of to-day, and we need it because only with the help of such a theology can the Christian religion hope to remain a power for good in the mind of man.

In succeeding articles our readers will find the principle stated above in general terms applied to specific instances. An article will be devoted to the significance and value of the Bible in the light of modern knowledge. Then the meaning of Inspiration and Revelation will be discussed. After that there will be articles on the mystery of the Godhead and the Divinity of Christ, and one also, we hope, on The Church. It is desirable, too, that there should be an opportunity of discussing the significance of the Ethics of Christ. Are the principles of the Sermon on the Mount for use or for ornament? Were they meant to be applied, progressively, if you will, in our personal and social life, or were they put forward as a Utopian dream beyond the possibility of human achievement? These are interesting and living questions, and it would do good to have them dealt with. We need only say, in concluding, that the writers will do their best, and they trust that their contributions will be of real service to the members of the Non-Subscribing Church, and perhaps to others, who are conscious of the difficulties of the present situation.

"The dignity of truth is lost with much protesting."—*Ben Johnson.*

THE KIKUYU CONTROVERSY.

By Rev. M. S. Dunbar.

In Downpatrick First Presbyterian Non-Subscribing Church on Sunday morning, 1st February, Rev. M. S. Dunbar, M.A., preaching from the text, Mark ix. 39-40, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is on our part," referred to the Kikuyu controversy. He said—It arose out of the action of two African Bishops connected with the Church of England, who met with their fellow-missionaries of other denominations, in order to see if they could come to some terms of agreement with one another, so as to present a more united front to the heathen around them. All joined in the Lord's Supper, which was presided over by one of the Bishops. To us this seems a very wise act and a truly Christian one, showing a tolerant spirit that can distinguish the essential from the non-essential, the spirit from the letter. It seems the very spirit of the Master, who refused to ban and condemn the man who, though not amongst the disciples, did like good works. But another African Bishop denounced this act of his fellow-bishops as heretical and contrary to the true idea of the Christian ministry, and he has appealed to the ecclesiastical authorities in England.

The High Church party, of course, side with the objecting Bishop, and one of our best known ecclesiastics, the Bishop of Oxford, threatens to secede from the Church if this act is condoned. He says—"I feel quite sure that to the great mass of High Churchmen such an open communion seems to involve principles so totally subversive of Catholic order and doctrine as to be strictly intolerable, in the sense that they could not continue in a fellowship which required of them to tolerate the recurrence of such incidents." It is not the first time we have heard all this. When the late Dean Stanley dispensed the communion to the Biblical revisers the same controversy arose, and the same threat was made. But nothing came of it, and most likely it will be the same again.

Some of you may wonder what is the cause of this strange dispute, what is at the root of this feeling of the High Churchman against the dissenter and the dissenting minister. It all springs from a theory, the theory, namely, that Christ centred spiritual power and authority in Peter as the head of the apostles—for to have unity you cannot begin with twelve, you must only have one—and Peter, who, as they say, was the first Bishop of Rome, though that cannot be satisfactorily proved, communicated this authority to his successor, and thus it has descended in a direct line to the present head of the Church at Rome. He communicates his authority to the Bishops, and they ordain the priests to teach and to administer the sacraments to the people. Hence, only those so ordained have the right to teach the Christian religion and to perform the offices attached to it. This is the Catholic theory, and the Anglican High Churchman adopts it ; only in this case the line of descent has been broken, for he is not in union with the Church of Rome, and his ordination, whether as priest or bishop, has not been recognised by the successor of Peter. The chain has also been broken in the Church of Rome itself, for at one time there were two Popes.

But these flaws are easily got over if one is enamoured of the theory, though the more plausible form seems to be that of the Church of Rome, where we think High Churchmen of all shades and denominations must ultimately find their home. It is an obscure and intricate theory which took a long time in the making, and the purpose of which was to bolster up ecclesiastical authority. The English Church has been infected by it, because the principles of the Reformation were never thoroughly carried out, but germs were allowed to remain in the Prayer-book, of which the High Church party have not been slow to take advantage. We have little patience with the theory. We may be sometimes apt to be annoyed by such pretensions on the part of the High Churchman, but there is more reason for pity, for while he makes these claims for himself and looks down on his Nonconformist brother minister, his claims are denied by the oldest and largest Church in Christendom. In the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church his orders are not valid, he has no more the right to teach and perform the duties of a clergyman than the humblest dissenting minister. We may imagine how galling this must be, and it should be revenge sufficient.

There is one good result of these dissensions and divisions among the sacerdotal party. The religious inquirer may feel somewhat awed and inclined to give in, so long as only one great and venerable organisation makes such a claim to divine authority, but when a rival springs up, one's course is clear. There is nothing for it but to use one s reason and judge between them ; and entering on the path of reason, one is most likely to continue therein, and to find that both claims are equally groundless, and to come to the conclusion that rest for mind and soul can only be got by trusting in the reason and conscience God has given us to guide us into the truth in this perplexed world of infallible books and authoritative Churches. The spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ are inconsistent with the sacerdotal idea of Christianity involved in this theory. Christ had no great love for priests, as is seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Neither is He in the habit of using the common terms of a sacerdotal religion. He never uses the word "sacrament," which indeed is not found in the Scriptures, and even the word "Church" is only found in the Gospels twice, both times in Matthew.

But the unreal character of the theory is seen at once when we bring it to the test of facts. Does it prove itself by the results produced in those who are episcopally ordained, and in the character of the people who are blessed with their ministrations ? Do we find that the rite of ordination imparts to those men more gifts and graces than they had before ? Do we find that the people who are privileged to have their services are superior in character and attainments to the flocks

ministered to by irregularly ordained men? No such phenomena appear. There are no facts which require to be explained by the supposition of some unknown force. There is no evidence of any unknown force. The same excellencies, the same defects may be seen in both the clergy and laity of all denominations. The same results are attained by those who disbelieve in the sacerdotal theory of Christianity as by those who believe in it. Of what use then is it? How can we come to any other conclusion than that it is a pure assumption, invented for a purpose after the simple, practical religion of Christ had been transformed into a dogmatic system more akin to the current philosophies of the day?

God does not deal with men in this mysterious, magical way. He communes with them as a father with his child. God is as near to the layman as to the minister or priest. No Christian minister has any spiritual rights or privileges which are not within the reach of everyone. Being specially devoted to the study of divine truth, a minister may help to guide you to it, but the decision must be made by your own mind. That is the principle of the Protestant religion. May the result of this renewed controversy be to show the baselessness of the theory on which priestly pretensions rest, and to banish the unlovely features of exclusiveness and intolerance from the hearts of men. May Christian teachers of every name and Christian people everywhere be drawn into closer bonds of sympathy and love. Then will the heathen be more powerfully attracted by the Gospel when they see the effect of it on its disciples, and can say, "Behold how these Christians love one another."

And thousands in our own country will have a more open mind and a warmer heart to the Christian religion when they see all such claims as infallibility and supernatural authority over men abandoned, and when ministers, and people of all denominations are able to mix together on a perfectly equal footing, as lovers and seekers of divine truth, none claiming authority over another, but all willing to minister to each other. Were that the state of things there would be more Churchgoers, there would be more religion, more charity, more unity and peace.

NON-SUBSCRIPTION.

By A. T.

The principle of non-subscription is as old as religion. Frequently, and at important times, it has held the commanding position, and, whenever, compelled by superior voting power, it has been suppressed, that suppression meant only partial or temporary eclipse, and never extinction. The claim may be made for it that the line has remained unbroken. In pre-Christian days the prophet Micah spoke forth his incomparable exhortation: He hath showed thee, O, man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah saw deeply into the meaning of the divine government, understood thoroughly the prevailing human needs, and he gave forth his thoughts in one brief sentence, which, notwithstanding intervening centuries, has lost nothing of its original beauty and force. One may be pardoned for regarding this exhortation as an argument against subscription. Ecclesiastical creeds, it is true, may not have been concerned, but, even so, the Church of the time had its own standards, such as they were, and the prophet pointed to a more excellent way. The Christian Scriptures offer no authority for the establishment of creeds and confessions of faith, either as a preservation of Christian thought or as a means of salvation for those who accept them. Jesus asked those who listened to his word to do the will of God, to think of God as their Heavenly Father, and to accept that view of life and eternity which he revealed to them. Nowhere does he make salvation depend upon beliefs, correct or incorrect, about himself, but everywhere does he make it depend upon purity of life and upon the maintenance of a right relationship

between a man and his God, between a man and his fellow-man. This view of the great questions involved has never at any time been lost sight of, and so long as non-subscription, with regard to ready-made systems of belief, holds a place in one man's mind and heart, that view, it is safe to say, will not be lost sight of.

It is particularly gratifying to those who have thus believed to meet with a word of agreement from other quarters, and especially from the great confessional Churches of Scotland. Such a word comes to us in the January issue of *The Hibbert Journal* in an article on The Value of Confessions of Faith, by the Rev. W. A. Curtis, B.D., D.Litt., Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Aberdeen. Every page of the article in question is full of interest, and one feels as it proceeds that the subject, with all its manifold difficulties, is here being treated in a masterly way, backed by a fine knowledge and a desire only to reach the truth. The article is divided into "Confessions and History," "Confessions and Religious Life," "Confessions and Holy Scripture," and "Confessions and Ecclesiastical Discipline." In each department the writer not only claims his values, but as freely admits the disadvantages. But let us hear what he has to say in the last division of his paper, viz., on Confessions and Ecclesiastical Discipline: "Clearly it is a great advantage to a Church to have a common body of doctrine, greater even than a common mode of worship or organisation, and it is a sacred duty to profess as much of the truth as common conviction will allow. Church and congregation, moreover, are entitled to receive some guarantee that the pastor of souls will teach the truth accredited, adequately and loyally. Confessions accepted or subscribed are meant to serve both ends. Broadly speaking, they have done so reasonably well, and they deserve our deepest gratitude. But to use or enforce them legally in a hard and fast way is un-Christian and unwise. The Church does not exist for the Confession, however venerable, but the Confession for the Church. The minister of Jesus Christ is not the special pleader of a particular theology, retained for a fee. The right to formulate the doctrinal content of faith is the prerogative and monopoly of no single age or generation, however confident of itself, and however competent. God is not the God of the dead, however great, but of the living; and His Truth, though it is eternal, is not stationary. If Faith has hands with which to cling, it has also feet with which to move forward. It would be well if we, who honour our ancient formularies, and resent the slightest invasion of their sacrosanctity, showed a little more confidence in their ability to bear handling and comparison. If better articles of faith were offered to us than we possess traditionally, would it not be our religious duty to accept them? Have we learned nothing and unlearned nothing worth recording since the Assemblies of Dordrecht and Westminster?"

And then the important question is asked as to how you are going to keep preaching within due doctrinal bounds, and the question is answered in a straight, fearless way, which will commend itself to many. "But, you say, may a minister of religion preach as he pleases with impunity? I answer only that disloyalty is not to be judged by narrow rules. We must be consistent and we must be fair. There is such a thing as disloyalty to the present and to the future to be kept in view. The letter of ancient standards even a lawyer will, if he can, interpret historically, in the light of the conditions of their age and the intentions of their framers. Even a lawyer, too, will take into account the effect of divergent use and wont in subsequent generations as modifying their force when employed as documents forming the basis of a contract of professional service. To subscribe an ancient Confession, itself originally framed by majority findings and through innumerable compromises in debate, itself also interpreted in our own time by different schools of opinion and types of scholarship, is obviously anything but a simple act. It implies, of course, a solemn compact and pledge

of loyalty to the past, and of loyalty to the living Church, but it involves no less an obligation to the Church's living Head and His indwelling Spirit. It seems to me—and I write under a profound sense of the gravity of the practical issue—that no branch of the Christian Church has any right to foreclose, irrevocably or irreformably, once for all, the form of its doctrinal testimony. Every Church, if it has eyes for the lessons of history since the dawn of the Reformation, ought to hold its property and administer its discipline on the explicit understanding that its hand is free from age to age to write afresh the sentences which utter its living belief in the living God. The Church needs freemen, not slaves, for its ministry. Even the world, though it delights in opinions that are dogmatic, and dearly loves "plain answers" to ugly questions, is not enamoured of men who proclaim the glorious liberty of the Gospel, while themselves in confessional shackles. Of course there is risk as well as dignity in freedom. Every employer and every offerer of free labour knows that. But is it for that reason better to go back to slavery? Select your men, train your men, trust your men, as your Master did. Run openly the risk of finding one man in twelve a traitor, as He did, and each of the twelve slow of heart and mind. For, after all, no articles of indenture, however strict, can possibly guarantee the future fidelity and competence of the employed. He is a blind reader of Church history who does not know that Articles of Faith are powerless to preserve intellectual uniformity."

In the last paragraph there occurs this quotation from Kant: "Of all the various possible forms of superstition, ecclesiastical extortion of beliefs and confessions is by far the most vexatious; for by this oppression conscience is singularly violated."

But here we must take our leave of this interesting article, and recommend those of our readers who would care to, to read it for themselves. They would be amply repaid. In the closing sentences the writer says: "I do not go so far as to say that at fixed intervals they (the confessions) should be revised, though Principal Rainy thought there was much to be said for that view. . . . Seasons of revision, like seasons of revival, are not to be forecast." Quite so. But, after all, the difference between the fixed time and the right time is neither here nor there. The fact of revision looming in the future, near or remote, holds the trouble ever-present. Would it not be better to run the risk of finding one man in twelve a traitor, as He did, and each of twelve slow of heart and mind? Think of the tremendous incubus that would be lifted from honest men, men quick of heart and mind, to speak forth the prophetic word that is in them!

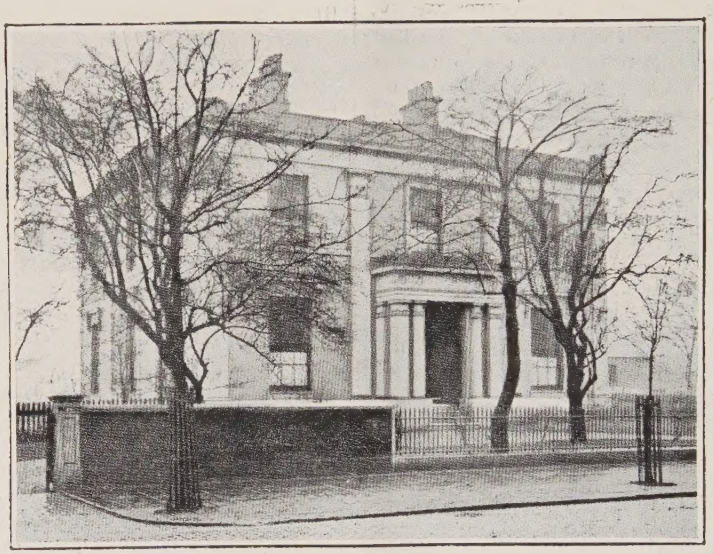
OBITUARY.

Mr. Samuel Magill Wallace, of Larne.

After a lengthened illness, this gentleman passed away on 9th ult. at the comparatively early age of 43 years. Coming to Larne when only 16 to commence his life work under the late Mr. Hay, then Clerk of Larne Union, Mr. Wallace speedily became Relieving Officer of Larne District, Attendance Officer of the Urban School Attendance Committee, Clerk of Larne Union, in succession to Mr. Hay, and Clerk to Larne Rural District Council. He also held the position of Clerk of the Larne Rural School Attendance Committee and of the local Pensions Sub-Committee. Never very robust, his many duties conscientiously discharged pressed heavily upon him, but, though his health became precarious several years ago, not until recently did his condition cause grave anxiety; and when the end came the sad news was received with deepest regret through the greater part of County Antrim, but more especially in Larne and in his native place—Kilwaughter On Wednesday, 11th ult., his remains were laid to rest in Kilwaughter Cemetery in presence of a very large assemblage who had followed in a procession of vehicles extending fully half a mile in length.

MRS. GASKELL'S HOUSE.

A PROPOSAL has gone forth, at the suggestion of Mr. Derwent Simpson and supported by *The Manchester Guardian*, that the home of the Gaskell family in Plymouth Grove, Manchester, should become the property of the Corporation, and be converted into a literary museum. It has been shown that this could be done with very little cost to the City, as some land that belongs to the house might be profitably built upon. It is suggested that the house should be utilised for a collection of furniture, pictures, works of art, books, manuscripts, and other things associated with Mrs. Gaskell, her family, and their illustrious friends. In estimation of cost no allowance has been made for the fact that many such houses in England are self-supporting by means of the shillings that are levied for admission, and in the case of Manchester, with its large and exceptionally intelligent population, there cannot be a doubt but that this admission money would amount to a very large sum per annum. The house has just become vacant through the death of Miss Margaret Gaskell, who, with her sister—she died a few years earlier—had resided in it from the time of their mother's death to their own. Here Mrs. Gaskell lived for long years with her husband, the Rev. William Gaskell, who was the minister of Cross Street (Unitarian) Chapel, Manchester. Here she wrote some of her best-known stories. Here she received among her guests Thackeray, Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, and a host of other writers. The drawing-room in particular is a delightful memento of the literary life of England. Apart from her unquestionably immortal *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, we believe Mrs. Gaskell to be one of the very great novelists of the Victorian era, whose fame is only now becoming fully recognised. Not only *Cranford* but *Cousin Phyllis*, *Wives and Daughters*, and other works by this exquisite writer are never likely to be forgotten. She stands with De Quincey as one of Manchester's two greatest writers, and so enlightened a city will scarcely fail to bring this worthy project of a permanent Gaskell memorial to fruition.



By courtesy of "The Manchester Guardian."

84, Plymouth Grove, Manchester,

Where Elizabeth Gaskell wrote many of her beautiful stories.

C. K. S.

LESSON NOTES FOR TEACHERS.

By Rev. E. H. Pickering, B.A.

The Kingdom of Israel.

General Introduction.—We are here introduced to a very terrible and barbarous state of things. Israel is now fighting against surrounding peoples for its existence as a kingdom. The Israelites show as fierce and cruel a spirit as their foes. Their one redeeming feature is their deep trust in God, although they gravely misunderstand the nature of God. He desires mercy, not sacrifice ; peace, and not war. But we must remember that the age was one of war and plunder, and the Israelites had to fight to maintain a foothold in their land. Nowadays we know that peace and mercy are the suitable weapons with which to fight. *e.g.*, Christ and Count Tolstoi.

For general text books read Bartram's "Heroes of Israel" and Spaulding's "Hebrew Prophets and Kings"—6d. each.

I. Saul's first disobedience. 1 Sam. xiii. 1-14. *Memory verse,* 1 Samuel, xiii. 13.

Note.—The first verse is obviously an error, because Saul had a grown-up son, Jonathan, who won a great victory over the Philistines. Then the Philistines defeated Saul, and the people were panic-stricken.

Points. 1. *The Philistines.* They dwelt on sea-coast to the S.E. of Israel, and were Israel's hereditary enemies.

2. *Saul's sin.* This was two-fold. (1) He disobeyed Samuel. (2) Doing what he ought not, he disobeyed God. Samuel was still regarded as greater than Saul ; and, moreover, although not actually forbidden, it was thought wrong for one who was not a priest or a prophet to sacrifice. Again, we see a narrow view of God. For it does not matter so long as a man is sincere. But Saul *really* thought it mattered, and therefore offended.

3. *Saul's excuse* is his greatest fault. He had not enough faith in God. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. See stories of Gideon and Jonathan.

II. The bravery of Jonathan. 1 Samuel xiv. 1-6. *Memory verse,* 1 Samuel, xiv. 6. "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

Introduction.—After Saul's disobedience the Philistines again triumphed, and brought Israel into almost abject slavery. (See 1 Sam. xiii. 19-22). Michmash, which the Philistines held, was well inside Israelite territory. Also the phrase (1 Sam. xiv. 11) "Behold the Hebrews (*i.e.* Israelites) came forth out of their holes," shows how utterly beaten they were. Except for Saul's little company of 600 there were no armed men at all.

Points. 1. *The armour bearer's loyalty* (verse 7). Bravery is to be found in both prince and peasant. Read the story of "Faithful John" in Grimm's Fairy Tales.

2. *Jonathan's deep trust in God.* He was brave because he felt confident that God would help him. See memory verse. We ought never to be deterred from doing what we think right because we are not very strong. With God on our side we are bound to win. *e.g.*, one time, only Jesus, then his twelve disciples ; but now, Christianity is the religion of the Western world. At one time, only William Lloyd Garrison and about twelve followers ; but in 30 years they had abolished slavery in the United States. (See also the story of Daniel, Dan. vi. 1-10)., or the brave Winkelreid at the battle of Sempach (Charlotte Yonge's "Book of Golden Deeds," 6d). The Swiss could make no impression on the Austrian lines until Winkelreid threw himself upon the cruel spears, and so broke a way into which the Swiss rushed like a wedge, and so won the battle.

III. Saul's rash vow and its consequences. 1 Sam. xiv. 17-46. *Memory verse,* 1 Sam. xiv. 45.

Points. 1. *Saul's rash prohibition.* No one to take any food, or he would be under a curse. He wished the people to spend the whole day pursuing the Philistines. Once more rash orders and vows are like gambling. Simple direct orders and statements

are best. *e.g.*, story of tortoise, which rashly promised untold wealth to any bird which would take him in the air. An eagle took him high up; but since the tortoise could not tell where the wealth was, the eagle dropped him so that he was shattered. Compare story of Jephthah (Judges xi. 29-40) and Herod (Mark vi. 14-29).

2. *Jonathan disobeyed unconsciously.* But that made no real difference according to the notions of the day. *e.g.*, "Cleanse me, O Lord, from secret sins."

3. *Jonathan's wise answer* (verses 29-30).

4. *Jonathan's courage.* As Saul could get no answer from God, he felt that someone had sinned. The lot fell on Jonathan, who was, like Jephthah's daughter, quite willing to die, so that his father should not feel disgraced before God. Luckily, the people could not stand their brave young deliverer being put to death, and their common sense and gratitude, which triumphed over narrow theology, must have been a great relief to Saul.

IV. Saul's second disobedience. 1 Sam. xv. 1-31. *Memory verse,* 1 Sam. xv. 22, "To obey is better than sacrifice."

Introduction. The Israelites really believed that God could put under a ban their enemies, and they thought they were remarkably pious the more zealous they were in butchery. Samuel thoroughly believed this, and so could with his own hands hew King Agog to pieces. This is horrible, but not so wicked as Saul's "tender mercy," for he, like Samuel, believed Agog and all his people and possessions were under a ban, but for the sake of gain, he stayed his hand. Fortunately we no longer believe such horrible things about God.

Points. 1. *Saul's failure.* Saul and his men honestly thought they ought to destroy the Amalekites utterly, but failed because they were attracted by their treasures. So we often make up our minds to uproot evil habits, but fail because we retain those that are pleasant.

2. *Samuel's magnificent rebuke* (verse 22) to Saul's miserable excuse (verse 21) that for God's sake (*i.e.*, for sacrifice) he had disobeyed God. Many people excuse the shadiness of their business on the ground that they must have something to do good with. God, however, prefers the pure heart to a rich gift (Psalm li. 16, 17).

3. *Saul feared the people more than God* (verse 24). We often fail to do right because we fear the opposition but especially the ridicule of others. It is so much easier to give way to those we can see with our eyes than to obey Him we feel with our hearts.

V. David is secretly anointed by Samuel. 1 Sam. xvi. 1-13. *Memory verse,* 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

Introduction. Saul was really a fine man, but his impetuous self-will and frequent disobediences unfitted him for the task of king. To Samuel, therefore, is entrusted the all-important task of choosing the next king, for Samuel is still Israel's leading man.

Points. 1. "*Cometh thou peaceably?*" (verse 4). The elders were afraid lest the great judge, Samuel, should have come to condemn them for some wrong doing.

2. *The youthful shepherd David* is chosen by Samuel, although his father thought him too unimportant even to be present. *e.g.*, story of Cinderella; also, Mark vi. 3, "Is not this the carpenter?" We often miss the glory of what is close at hand.

3. *The memory verse* contains a most beautiful lesson. Samuel was most attracted by the great strength and developed power of Eliab, but God had chosen the youthful David, because He had looked into his heart. Outward appearance is like the beautiful full blown rose, which soon fades. The heart is like the insignificant looking young tree, which eventually grew and grew, producing an increasing number of roses as the years go on. We should try rather to be good than merely *seem* good, or else we run the risk of becoming whited sepulchres. *e.g.*, story of foolish child who insisted on having the gilded empty shells used merely for decoration rather than the common looking ones full of good food.

Reports.

Ballymoney.—We regret to announce the death of Mrs. David Matts, widow of the late Rev. David Matts, formerly minister of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Ballymoney, which took place at the residence of her nephew, West Bromwich. Mrs. Matts, who was 81, was greatly esteemed by the congregation to which her husband ministered, and her loss will be felt by a large circle of relatives and friends. The Rev. D. Matts, who retired from the ministry a little over twelve months ago, after 47 years' service, and went to reside at West Bromwich, died last November.

* *

Crumlin.—The Annual Business Meeting of the congregation was held after service on Sunday morning, the 22nd February. The Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were read and adopted. The latter showed a balance in hand of £39 5s. 3½d., an increase of over £11 on last year's. The officers and Committee for the last year were unanimously re-elected. The minister emphasised in his statement the importance of fellowship, and he pleaded for a larger expression of the missionary spirit and a more frequent and regular attendance at the Church services.

* *

Dromore.—The Scholars' Entertainment and Prize Distribution, held on Friday evening, February 9th, brought together a large assemblage of people. Long before the time of starting the school-room was crowded, and many were unable to find seats, though the charge of admission to members of the congregation and friends was higher than in the previous year. The programme in the main was a scholars' one, and proved quite as attractive as any of its predecessors. In addition to choruses, songs, a recitation, and a sketch, all of which received well-merited applause, there was a performance of "Dick Whittington," from the pen of the Rev. Mr. Hawkes, which makes the fifth of this gentleman's plays that the Dromore scholars have performed. The different parts were sustained in a manner which all agreed was extremely creditable to the scholars themselves and to those who undertook the training of them. The musical portions of the play were rendered with much taste and feeling. The scenery was appropriate and the costumes of a kind suited to the period in which the story of Whittington is supposed to have occurred. The Chairman reported that there were 170 scholars on the rolls, and that the attendance had been fairly well maintained Sixty scholars had qualified for prizes.

* *

Moneyrea.—On Wednesday evening, January 28th, a delightful concert was given in the Old School-room, under the auspices of the United Temperance Guild. In spite of inclement weather, a splendid audience assembled to share in the feast of music and listen to the inspiring addresses delivered by the two appointed speakers—Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., and Mr. Atkinson, of the Irish Temperance League. Mr. Rossington's address was singularly impressive, happy, and convincing. The President of the Guild (Rev. M. Watkins) occupied the chair, and the following contributed to the musical part of the programme so acceptably that many of the items were repeatedly encored:—Miss Molyneaux (soprano), a pupil of Mr. Brennan, the City Organist; Miss Bina Kennedy (piano); Miss Fanny Lappin, Miss Isa M'K. Turkington, Messrs. William Dent (humorist), A. J. Parkes, T. J. Millen, and Master Willie Gordon. Mr. Parkes filled also the duties of accompanist. Proceedings ended with the audience singing "Auld Lang Syne."

* *

Mountpottinger.—On Wednesday evening, February 11th, a lantern lecture was given in the school-room by the Mr. J. H. Gilliland on "A Tour in Rome and North Italy." Mr. Gilliland prefaced the exhibition of a number of interesting slides with a brief sketch of Roman history. Both lecture and slides were thoroughly enjoyed by a good audience, and the thanks of the meeting was conveyed to the lecturer by Mr. E. R. Jackson and Mr. H. Thomas.

On Sunday morning, February 8th, at the close of service, a congregational meeting was held to consider the question of qualifying for the grant from the new Sustentation Fund. After a brief exposition of the conditions of qualification by the minister, it was resolved to raise the sum required by special annual contributions, Mr. John Allen being appointed Sustentation Fund treasurer.

* *

Newry.—The monthly meeting of the Young People's Guild was held in the Schoolroom on Tuesday, 10th February, and was well attended. The arrangements were in the capable hands of the ladies, who provided an excellent tea, and a most enjoyable programme. The President, Mrs. Slipper, presided, and introduced a short programme of music, recitations, and a sketch, to which the following ladies contributed: —Pianoforte solo, Miss Govers; recitation, Miss M'Lelland; pianoforte solo, Misses Lamb; song, Miss Littlewood; recitation, Mrs. J. Rowland; sketch, Misses M. Mitchell and M. Scott Berry. A guessing competition followed, and proved very amusing, prizes being awarded to Masters Allen Rowland, Bruce Slipper, and Joseph Mitchell. A hearty vote of thanks was proposed by the Rev. G. J. Slipper, seconded by Mr. Walter Scott, and carried unanimously. Miss Warnock replied on behalf of the ladies, and the meeting was closed with the Benediction.

* *

Newtownards.—The Annual Congregational Re-union was held in the Church on Monday evening, January 19th, 1914. A good number sat down to tea, during which selections were given on a phonograph, kindly lent by Mr. John Apperson. After tea, the chair was occupied by the pastor of the Church, Rev. R. Maxwell King, who extended a hearty welcome to all the visitors. The year just closed, he said, had been a most trying one for all congregations, and theirs suffered with the rest, but withal they had had a very successful year, and they started the present year with the same courage and resolutions as they did the year just closed. He announced that he had received an apology from Rev. Mr. Ashworth, who was unable to attend through illness. Mr. Hugh Ferguson, in moving the adoption of the Secretary's and Treasurer's reports, referred to the loss the Church had sustained through the death of Mr. James Wilson. Mr. David Ferguson seconded, and the reports were passed. Mr. Samuel Harrison moved, and the Chairman seconded, the re-election of last year's Committee, adding the name of Mr. Robert Ferguson, Ballymagreehan. The motion was passed. Rev. E. H. Pickering, of All Souls' Church, Belfast, gave a short address, exhorting the members to work harder for the Church, and show their love for God and one another. He hoped to be back amongst them often, and that his congregation would know that congregation better than they had done in the past. At intervals a programme was gone through, those contributing being Miss E. Ferguson, Miss Thornberry, Miss Hagins, Miss M. Doggart, Messrs. Jos. H. Murphy, and J. N. Doggart. The accompaniments were capably played by Miss E. Ferguson and Rev. R. M. King. At the conclusion of the programme, Mr. David O'Prey, U.D.C., conveyed a hearty vote of thanks to the tea-makers, artistes, and all who had assisted in the evening's enjoyment, and thanked the Chairman for the welcome extended the visitors. The meeting closed with the singing of "God be with you till we meet again," and the pronouncement of the benediction."

* *

Orphan Society.—The Secretary of the Orphan Society desires to draw the attention of local treasurers and secretaries to the fact—already notified—of the recent change in the Treasurership. All subscriptions are now to be sent to Mr. A. K. Stewart, 49 Donegall Place, Belfast, and all lists of subscriptions to Rev. A. Turner, Templepatrick. These are all due on 31st March, and the Secretary is greatly helped and obliged when this date is observed, and when the lists are made out in alphabetical order ready for the printer.

The Secretary begs to thank those who thus assist him.

BAPTISM.

LECKIE—On February 20th, 1914, at Vulcan Terrace, Ballyhackamore, Belfast, by the Moderator of Antrim Presbytery—Rev. Alex. O. Ashworth—Eleanor, daughter of John and Margaret Leckie. Born February 2nd, 1914.

DEATH.

O'NEILL—On Monday, December 22nd, 1913, after a long illness, Bob O'Neill, of Ballyhemlin, Co. Down, aged 23 years.

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